

MR. DAVID LINCOLN, ALPENA, MICHIGAN.

INTERVIEWED BY

WM. WAKEHAM AND RICHARD RATHBUN,

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Has been fishing here for the last 27 years. I have either been fishing or been interested in it during that time. I run a tug now and have no pound nets. Fish entirely with gill nets.

Experiences

There has been a gradual decrease in the fishing on the whole. Whitefish at one time were very abundant here. At certain times of the year you would get them anywhere in the bay, but with gill nets we would get them outside in certain depths of water and on certain grounds. In former years we did not take the trout, but now we go for any thing we can get, and we take trout because they are more plentiful. At

*Fish decrease
W. f. distrib.
main catch formerly.*

*Trout
Caught now
more than
formerly.*

one time there were plenty of whitefish and we did not bother about catching trout, as whitefish brought more money. At that time we could get all the trout we wanted at any time.

History
P. & G.
T.
decline

When I began there was extensive fishing going on and it existed long before my day, but at that time it was carried on with sail boats. They had both pound nets and gill nets then. Pound nets were fished then more than they are now. It is played out so now that nobody fishes them to amount to much. Our pound nets are playing out here.

G.
boats
loc.
Season

When I began there must have been 20 sail boats fishing here, at Alpena, North Point, Nine-Mile Point and Sugar Island. It is too far for sail boats to go to the gill net ground now. They fished here in the summer south of the islands, but still it was scattered all along the shore here. A

boat then would probably use about 3 miles of twine. They would use about the same mesh as they do now, 4 5-8 and 4 3-4, but the twine was coarser. About 12 years ago there were 9 tugs fished out of here. The fishing has been gradually decreasing ever since I started to fish here, but there has been years when they caught as many fish, but the facilities for catching them were improved all the while.

The bottom where the pound nets used to be set is fouler than it used to be. I think the main reason that pound net fishing does not pay is that there are no fish to be caught.

I think the pound nets have always used about the same size mesh. The back of the pot is the principal place, and the rest of the net does not amount to so much. If they reduced the size mesh in the back of the pot, that is what kills the little ones.

q.

quantity
descrip

lugs

decrease fish

larger catch

P. bottom, foul

P. no fish to be caught,

P. mesh
fish

P.
W.F.
Season

They have always got more or less whitefish in the pound nets since my recollection. The whitefish season in the pound nets, they would begin to come on in July and September would be the best month, and it would last until about the first of November. Would not do much pound netting in November. They might some years, but as a rule they did not.

W.F.
Trout
Size

Do not notice any decrease in the average size of the fish. The whitefish are smaller, but I do not think there is much of any difference in the trout.

Imp. fish
M. f. & Trout

walleye
sturgeon

The important fishes here are the whitefish and trout. Of course we catch a few pickerel and sturgeon, but they never amount to anything. There have been years that they got a fair run of pickerel in the bay, but take it on the whole it did not amount to much. It is only late years that we

Herring.

have paid any attention to herring. I do not think the herring have decreased. I think they catch as many as they ever did.

long jaw

We never catch the long jaws to amount to anything.

*w.f.
decrease**g.*

There is not one per cent. of the whitefish caught that there used to be. You take a sail boat with the little short gangs we used to employ in the summer months and we would go out and average from 8 to 10 barrels of fish at a lift; now you can fish a month and not get that many whitefish, and if you put the same amount of twine we formerly used and the same men, and stretch it out in the lakes where we used to get good fishing you would not get enough to eat. In all the fishing that was done this last week, I do not think there were 1,000 lbs. of whitefish caught. The whitefish are almost extinct.

*smaller
destruction
L. Mich.*

The most fish I ever saw destroyed was on

the north shore of Lake Michigan, and that is the most outrageous thing I ever saw. You take it west of there clear up to Manistique, I have seen millions of little whitefish coming out, so small that they could not dress them, and others that they did dress they had to sell for 3's and 4's. And I presume it is going on today just the same as it ever was. That was at Swishwan Point.

The pound nets destroy the small whitefish by the millions. The pound nets are to a large extent, more so than the gill nets, responsible for the decrease. In the gill nets we would not get any much less than 1 1-2 or 2 lbs., but the pound nets sweep everything that comes along. I think the pound nets should not be allowed to fish if you want to keep the fish in the lake. It would be all right to increase the mesh, if you have a government officer standing

P.
destructive to
W.F.
more than G.

mesh
fish

Increase
mesh

right over it with a shot gun, but otherwise you can make all the laws you want to.

I would have a close season if you want *Fr. you*

Close season
to protect the fish. Would have it for the whitefish and also for the trout. Trout

Trout spawning season
begin spawning in September and spawn clear up to the first of December, and when the fish are right on the ground spawning thick they should not be disturbed. At different places trout spawn at different seasons.

You take it around the island and they spawn in September. Out on the big reef they will spawn later on. We make a distinction between the run of shoal trout and deep water trout. There are different classes of trout just the same as there are whitefish. In different localities they spawn differently. You take it on Lake Michigan on that reef near Manistique, we got a great many trout on it all through October and

November, and we thought we were going to get some whitefish, and along about the 5th of December until about the 10th the whitefish spawned there. Nobody had ever caught onto it before, and we slaughtered them. But they are a different class of fish. Our fish here are all through spawning before they begin spawning up there at all. Up at Marquette they spawn right around the beach and around Granite Rock. I think it would be advisable to have different close seasons at different places. During the close season we would use frozen stock, and if they would not take that they could eat suckers and bull-heads. It probably would increase the price of fish, and would undoubtedly be a hardship to some. We all think it would be a hardship to have to quit, but eventually I think it would be a benefit to us.

There is no use making laws unless you en-

*Inf.
Spawning
Season*

Close season

*Laws should
be enforced*

force them, however.

There has been a decrease in the trout also. It is not the same as whitefish, but they are getting scarcer all the while. At this time 12 years ago, if we set out on the big reef where we are fishing now we would get more fish in one day than we do now in a week. And, furthermore, where we first struck the reef we used to get them on the inside edge of it, but now you have got to go clear to the east side. I think it would be beneficial to fishermen if they did not allow them to fish in the fall, and in fact, I know it would. About 1-5 of the season's catch is taken in November, and it might be 1-4. But here is the point: if I take out my twine the first of October and not set another net this year I would not have to buy one lb. of twine, but if you fish through October and November, you go

Trout
decrease

Close season

Fall catch

Twine

on this rough bottom where fish are plenty, and you soon use up your twine. Now you pay your men and pay all your other expenses and replace your twine, and it is a question whether it pays. I do not know as I shall fish at all this fall; I rather think I will not. You take new twine and fish it through the fall months and you have got to replace it.

You take it around here the pound nets are not out of the water at all. I do not like pound nets, although I may be prejudiced, but I do know they slaughter small fish. You can take it anywhere and you will notice where you find pound nets the fish have decreased, although they will tell you they have not. And they will put up small whitefish and call them herring. It is only a question of time, when they will have killed the herring off.

P.
Season
destructive

Small whitefish
herring

offal

There has been much fouling of the ground by throwing offal overboard years ago, but they do not do it now. It is a bad thing and should be prevented.

saw mills.

Undoubtedly saw mills litter the ground up, but they have not done it extensively in this region. Of course there is quite a little gets away, but they do not deliberately throw it in the water. There are places where they have done it, but they have never done it in Alpena. I do not think there was ever any went out of here any more than would naturally get away from the mills. I think one reason is, those mills have always been interested enough to keep them from throwing it in as the harbor would fill up, and there is not any too much water. The mills along the lake shore here I think are always very careful about that. The only place I have seen that done to any

extent is at Manistique. I do not think the decrease has been due to any such thing, but I think the main thing is that they have killed them off. I do not know whether the pulp mill has ever done any damage or not. They protect the fish better in Canada than they do here. They are not any too severe either.

It is pretty hard to regulate the size of fish marketed. You can catch trout in a 5 inch mesh that would not weigh 1 lb., but do not catch any small whitefish. The size of the gill net whitefish is all right enough. If you had a close season it would do more I think to increase the supply than anything else. If I had the whole say myself, I would not have any pound netting at all. I would give them a certain length of time to wear their twine out and if they got any more I would burn it up. If the

Decrease due
to overfishing

pulp mill

Regulating
size of fish

fish &
mesh (G)

Close season

Stop P.

P.
regulate mesh

fish & mesh

M. J. Smallest
market size

Curtain

Thing will soon
regulate itself

U.S. make
laws

pound nets have to stay, I would regulate the size of the mesh--give them good big mesh, nothing less than 4 inch mesh for the back of the pound. Anything that would stay in a 4 inch mesh would be large enough. I do not want to handle whitefish less than 1 1-2 lb. dressed. Just so long as they fish pound nets, so long will they catch small fish. They can drop a curtain down if they want to, and it is easy enough done. You or I would do it if we were in the business.

I tell you unless something is done, and done quickly, the thing will regulate itself; it is only a question of time. The State has made laws, but I do not think there will be any laws to amount to anything until the United States makes the laws. I think the United States and Canada ought to jointly form a law and pass it, and enforce

Reg

it. I do not believe there is a law in the State of Michigan that would hold water if it was tested. That is in regard to the Great Lakes. Some men will advance the most nonsensical ideas, and tell you that there are more trout now than there ever were.

Trout decrease

It would be all right to take the spawn and put it back on the ground, but I tell you you could not make the fishermen do it. As a general thing they are getting pretty good lifts and have all they can do to attend to their work.

Fishermen return spawn.

For my part I am not particular what laws they pass but I would like to see a close season. I think it would be better for all of us. Last fall we might have done fairly well, but if I had quit fishing the first of October I would have been money ahead. I got a good many fish and got a good fair price, but the trouble is you lose

Close season

Reg

*Money ahead
not to have
fished full
of 1893*

so much twine, and you have to pay high wages, and there is no money in it. It is only a question of time when the whitefish will play out and I want to get my share while they are going. That fishing will probably last as long as I will and my children can look out for themselves.

Some people say the fish go from here over to Canada. If a foul bottom will drive the fish out they will not stay long in Georgian Bay with all the rafting there is there.

As far as we are concerned here we would have been just as well off without the hatchery as with it, as we do not see any benefit from it. It does no particular good, or harm.

(Mr. Lincoln has a fish market where he sells retail all fish products.)

W. J.
decrease

Fish go to
Canada.

Georgian Bay
foul bottom

Hatchery

business.

